UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1993
5 October 1995

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Pope John Paul II, in address to General Assembly, calls for common effort to build civilization of love based on values of peace, solidarity, justice and liberty.

* Secretary-General says spirituality provides common bond among nations; United Nations was created so compassion could conquer despair of poverty, disease and injustice.

* Bosnian parties agree to cease-fire with effect from Tuesday; United States-brokered agreement requires restoration of Sarajevo utilities and reopening of roads to Gorazde.

* UNPROFOR troop strength to be reduced by 9,000 as military situation stabilizes and political process gains momentum in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

* United Nations expresses concern about financial situation of International Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia; says only 11 Member States have paid assessed contributions for 1995.

* Expanded draft on land-mines circulates at Review Conference of States Parties to Conventional Weapons Convention.

* Special Political and Decolonization Committee approves programme of work for session and elects Vice-Chairmen.

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Addressing the General Assembly on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, Pope John Paul II today called for a common effort to build a civilization of love based on the universal values of peace, solidarity, justice and liberty. He said that in order to ensure that the new millennium witnessed a new flourishing of the human spirit, mediated through an authentic culture of freedom, men and women must learn to conquer fear. He stressed that fear of the future could only be overcome through a collective effort.

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Fifty years after its founding, the need for the United Nations was even more obvious, the Pope said. The Organization needed to rise above the status of an administrative institution and become a moral centre where nations felt at home and developed a shared awareness of being one family. The United Nations had the historic task not only of serving as a centre of mediation for conflict resolution, but also of fostering values and initiatives of solidarity which could raise the level of relations between nations from simple existence with others to existence for others.

Unhappily, the world had yet to learn how to live with diversity, the Pope said, citing recent events in the Balkans and central Africa. Amplified by historic grievances and the manipulations of the unscrupulous, the fear of "difference" could lead to a denial of the humanity of "the other" with the result that people fell into a cycle of violence. He emphasized that different cultures were but different ways of facing the question of the meaning of existence. "And it is precisely here that we find one source of the respect which is due to every culture and every nation: every culture is an effort to ponder the mystery of the world and in particular of the human person: it is a way of giving expression to the transcendent dimension of human life."

The global economy needed an ethic of solidarity, if participation, growth and a just distribution of goods were to characterize the future of humanity, he went on to say. "When millions of people are suffering from a poverty which means hunger, malnutrition, sickness, illiteracy and degradation, we must not only remind ourselves that no one has a right to exploit another for his own advantage, but also and above all we must recommit ourselves to that solidarity which enables others to live out, in the actual circumstances of their economic and political lives, the creativity which is a distinguishing mark of the human person and the true source of the wealth of nations in today's world."

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Introducing Pope John Paul II to the General Assembly, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said that spirituality was humanity's greatest gift, and that belief in a higher reality provided a common bond among nations. However, a crisis of the human spirit was taking place and it must be made possible for peoples to regain their faith. He stressed that the United Nations was essential for humanity to rebuild its spiritual foundations.

The Holy Father's presence was a reminder of the spiritual dimension of the United Nations, the Secretary-General continued. The Organization had been created so that hope could conquer the horror of war. It had been created so that compassion -- the compassion shared by all religions -- could conquer the despair of poverty, disease and injustice.

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"Hope enables us to continue our mission, under the most adverse conditions," he concluded. "Faith enables us to continue the dialogue, to pursue negotiation, even when a situation seems desperate. Love enables us to continue development, to reach out to the less fortunate of our fellow human beings."

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The warring parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina today signed a cease-fire agreement covering the whole country, according to United Nations radio in Zagreb. The cease-fire will take effect on Tuesday, October 10, provided gas and electricity supplies have been restored to Sarajevo by then. It will last for 60 days, or until completion of peace talks aimed at a full peace settlement. The agreement requires the reopening of roads into Gorazde, the last enclave in eastern Bosnia.

The agreement brokered by the United States was signed after an intense round of "telephone shuttle diplomacy" between negotiators in Sarajevo and Belgrade, United States envoy Richard Holbrooke was reported as saying. He added that full implementation of the cease-fire would be critical.

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The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) is to be reconfigured in response to dramatic changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the stabilization of the military situation and developments in the political process, a spokesman for the Organization announced today. On the recommendation of the Force Commander, and with the approval of the Secretary-General, troop strength will be reduced from 30,500 to 21,000, while the overall structure of the Force will be streamlined. Redeployments are expected to begin later this month.

UNPROFOR units from Bangladesh, Canada, the Netherlands, Pakistan and the United Kingdom will be repatriated, for a reduction of over 4,000 troops, the spokesman continued. At the same time, units from Malaysia, the Nordic countries, Pakistan, Spain and Turkey will be cut by to up to 500 troops to conform to United Nations specifications for a generic battalion strength. That will result in a further reduction of over 2,000.

About 3,000 members of the United Kingdom's 24th Air Mobile Brigade, deployed as part of the Rapid Reaction Force (RRF), will be relocated to the United Kingdom. They will remain on standby to redeploy within seven days if required, bringing the total number of troops on standby to 8,000.

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A United Nations spokesman today expressed concern about the financial situation of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. He noted that since the July decision to fund the Tribunal by assessed contributions, only $1.16 million of the $20.16 million needed for 1995 had been received. Only 11 Member States had paid any of their assessments. If States were genuinely concerned about the work of the Tribunal, they should provide the necessary funds, he concluded.

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An expanded draft of the Protocol on anti-personnel land-mines has been circulated at the Vienna Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. The Protocol is being redrafted to strengthen the Convention's restrictions on the production and use of land-mines.

The new draft, which emerged from consultations in a working group, is three times longer and far more specific than the original. It specifies the circumstances in which the Protocol would be applied and the implications of its application. The working group agreed that, in cases of internal armed conflicts on a State party's territory, dissident armed groups in that territory would be bound by the Protocol. It did not decide, however, whether the Protocol should apply only to armed conflicts covered by the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

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The Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) yesterday approved its programme of work for the current session and elected Niall Holohan (Ireland) and Jalal Samadi (Iran) as its two Vice-Chairmen. It also established an open-ended working group on the peaceful uses of outer space.

In his opening address, Chairman Francis Muthaura (Kenya) said the Committee had an important task in improving the peace-keeping role of the United Nations. Peace-keeping was a major instrument for international peace and security, as well as a support for humanitarian activities. Ironically, the Organization did many good things but tended to be identified by its few shortcomings.

The signing of the Interim Agreement extending Palestinian administrative authority over the West Bank had reinforced the momentum for peace in the Middle East, the Chairman told the Committee. However, the preparation for the referendum in Western Sahara had been slower than anticipated and must be speeded up.

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